**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) Coating blade for the application of coating color onto a travelling web, said blade having an edge section with a profile conformed to the surface of said web when in engagement therewith~~, characterized by~~ wherein there is a sacrificial layer covering at least said section and protecting the underlying edge section during the web loading phase, wherein said sacrificial layer is adapted to disappear, when using the blade, as a result of the arrival of the coating color at the coating blade.

2. (Original) Coating blade according to claim 1 for use in the application of an aqueous coating color, wherein said sacrificial layer is soluble in water and otherwise compatible with said coating color.

3. (Currently Amended) Coating blade according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein said sacrificial layer is substantially non-hygroscopic.

4. (Currently Amended) Coating blade according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein said sacrificial layer ~~is constituted by~~ comprises a material selected from water-soluble polymers and polysaccharides capable of forming a film.

5. (Original) Coating blade according to claim 4, wherein said material is selected from acrylic or methacrylic polymers and copolymers and their salts.

6. (Original) Coating blade according to claim 4, wherein said material is selected from anionic copolymers on the basis of Acrylic acid, Acrylic ester and Acrylonitrile.

7. (Original) Coating blade according to claim 4, wherein said material is selected from film-forming polysaccharides.

8. (Currently Amended) Coating blade ~~accoring~~ according to claim 7, wherein said material is selected from hemi-celluloses, plant gums, cellulose and derivatives thereof, starch and derivatives thereof, microbial polysaccharides, algal polysaccharides, and chitosan and derivatives thereof.

9. (Original) Coating blade according to claim 8, wherein said material is selected from ethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose and carboxymethyl cellulose.

10. (Currently Amended) Coating blade according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 selected from steel blades, hard-tipped blades, and soft tipped blades.

11. (Original) A method of preparing a coating blade for the application of coating color onto a travelling web, said blade having an edge section with a profile conformed to the surface of said web when in engagement therewith, comprising the following steps for providing the blade with a sacrificial layer protecting said edge section during a web loading phase:

a) preparing a solution containing a material capable of forming a film on evaporation of solvent;

b) applying said solution onto at least said section; and

c) allowing the applied solution to dry so as to form, on at least said section, a solid film having a thickness of 100 µm to 700 µm;

wherein the sacrificial layer is adapted to disappear, when using the blade, as a result of the arrival of the coating color at the coating blade.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 11, wherein step c) includes heating to an elevated temperature.

13. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 11 ~~or 12~~, wherein the solution is applied in several layers with intermediate heating between the application of each layer.

14. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the claims 11 to 13~~ claim 11, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains a polysaccharide in a concentration of at most about 10% by weight.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein said concentration is from about 1% to about 7% by weight.

16. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the claims 11 to 13~~ claim 11, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains an anionic copolymer on the basis of acrylic acid, acrylic ester and acrylonitrile in a concentration of at most about 40% by weight.

17. (Original) A method according to claim 16, wherein said concentration is about 15% to about 30%.

18. (New) Coating blade according to claim 2, wherein said sacrificial layer is substantially non-hygroscopic.

19. (New) A method according to claim 12, wherein the solution is applied in several layers with intermediate heating between the application of each layer.

20. (New) A method according to claim 12, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains a polysaccharide in a concentration of at most about 10% by weight.

21. (New) A method according to claim 13, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains a polysaccharide in a concentration of at most about 10% by weight.

22. (New) A method according to claim 12, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains an anionic copolymer on the basis of acrylic acid, acrylic ester and acrylonitrile in a concentration of at most about 40% by weight.

23. (New) A method according to claim 13, wherein under step a) an aqueous solution is prepared which contains an anionic copolymer on the basis of acrylic acid, acrylic ester and acrylonitrile in a concentration of at most about 40% by weight.